

**The politics of curriculum decision-making and their effects on students' knowledge construction in selected secondary schools in Sumbawanga municipality in Tanzania.**

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Curriculum theory maintains that school curriculum content, organization, and structure are political because their decisions are influenced by individual and group values in terms of knowledge, ideologies, motivation, interests, and attitudes. Consequently, curriculum decisions involves struggles, conflicts, contestations, resistances, and competition between various groups with varying political, social and economic interest and power relations. Over the past two decades, curriculum policy in Tanzania has been under the influence of many social, political, and economic, and cultural influences. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine how politics influenced schools and teachers' curriculum decision making and how these affected knowledge construction among students in selected secondary schools. Specifically, the study had the following objectives: to examine how teachers' curriculum and pedagogic decisions are influenced by powerful individuals and institutions; to identify the effects of political influences on curriculum decision making on students' knowledge construction in secondary schools; and to examine the forms of teachers' responses towards the effects of politics of curriculum decision making. The study employed qualitative research approach using case study design. Four secondary schools within Sumbawanga municipality were selected for this study. Purposive sampling techniques were employed to obtain the appropriate participants who provided data through interviews, observations, and documentary review. The data collected were manually coded until the themes emerged and then themes were presented and discussed thematically. The study found out that teachers' curriculum and pedagogic decisions were influenced by powerful individuals and institutions such as TIE, capitalist textbook publishers, ministers of education and local government politicians such as RCs and DCs. They influenced textbook selection, teachers' pedagogy, teaching modules, school programs, grading system and curriculum subjects. On students' knowledge construction, their influence resulted into; expansion of knowledge to students, provision of theoretical knowledge, dominance of examinational oriented knowledge and dependence on capitalists' dominance discourses. Teachers' reacted by rejecting some acts of politics and devising their context-specific strategies that reformed their works in

relation to the current curriculum. From the findings, it was concluded that because politics of curriculum decision making affects students knowledge construction to the greater extent, it is very important to deal with political interests in more positive way during the curriculum decision making. The study recommended on the need to give priority to educational experts and teachers to decide on issues related to curriculum and pedagogies in secondary schools.